

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ are not perfect people.

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 9:9-13

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Among Jewish circles, tax collectors were the worst. They were labeled traitors because of their connection to the Roman government and viewed as thieves for collecting extra taxes to line their own pockets. It's possible the only friends tax collectors had were other tax collectors. Matthew's tax booth was located "beside the sea" (Mark 2:13-14). Considering Jesus' first disciples were fishermen (Matt. 4:18-22), it is likely they paid taxes to Matthew. They probably despised Matthew and couldn't believe Jesus would invite him, of all people, to join their group.

Check out the **Teacher Prep Video** for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/816584637>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We've giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What's the worst punishment you've received from a teacher or coach? What were you in trouble for doing?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

The tax collector, Matthew, was an unlikely choice for a disciple. The religious leaders of Jesus' day, the Pharisees, couldn't understand why Jesus would even sit down to eat with such sinners. But Jesus demonstrates in this passage that *disciples of Christ are not perfect people*.

Read Matthew 9:9 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How have you treated people differently based on their reputation?
Humans are much more unforgiving than God. We can allow the past mistakes others make to determine how we treat them now.
- What do you think would change if you saw people the same way God does?
Answers will vary, but if we learn to see people the way God does, we might start treating them the way Jesus did.



Say something like: Despite having a multitude of our own sins, we tend to fixate on other people's sins. Jesus addressed this issue by referring to sawdust and planks in people's eyes (Matt. 7:3–5). If we truly believe that God's grace is greater than all our sin (Rom. 5:20–21), we must also believe that no one is beyond the saving power of God.

Read Matthew 9:10–12 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How do you think the disciples felt about going to dinner with a bunch of “sinners”?
Answers will vary, and there is no way to know for sure, but the disciples probably learned a lot about who Jesus can reach and the type of Savior he is.
- How can we learn to treat everyone the way we see Jesus do it?
Answers will vary, but recognizing our desperate need for Christ can help us be more understanding of others who don't know him.
- Do you see yourself as “well” or “sick”? Explain your answer.
Answers will vary. Only Christ can heal us and make us well. There is nothing good about us (Luke 18:19; Rom. 3:10), nor can we be made right with God outside of Christ (Rom. 5:11). Only Jesus can save us from ourselves (Acts 4:12).



Say something like: We must understand that we are not better than anyone else. The only difference between lost people and us is Jesus. He can make a life-changing difference in anyone's life just like he did in ours.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Matthew 9:12–13 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- Why is it significant that Jesus came to the defense of his new tax collector friends in verses 11–12?
Answers will vary, but we can see that rescuing his people has always been a character trait of Christ.
- What did Jesus mean when he said he desired mercy over sacrifice?
In this verse, sacrifices are symbolic of religious rule-following or legalism. Mercy represents love for God and his people. Reference Hosea 6:6.
- How do we ensure “mercy” matters more to us than “sacrifice” does?
Answers will vary. Experiencing God's daily mercies and understanding that our relationship with Jesus is what makes us right, not our religious acts, is a big step in the right direction.



Say something like: Our “godly works” result from our relationship with Jesus. They are not what creates the relationship with Jesus.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how you repurposed something you were going to throw away into something useful.

Example: What comes to mind when you think about different materials artists use to create their stunning works? You're probably thinking about paint, canvas, clay, colored pencils, and even various metals, right? What about garbage? There is a German artist named HA Schult who uses scrap pieces of junk to create his works of art. One of his most famous pieces is titled Trash People, which has been displayed on every continent. Just as you imagine it to be, the exhibit is of people made entirely from trash transformed into art.¹ While this art is quite impressive, the God we serve is a much better artist. He can transform the most broken of people into godly masterpieces.



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

- How can God use your broken pieces for the glory of his Kingdom?

Answers will vary. One example is God using what we've learned from the painful experiences in our lives (parents' divorce or the death of a loved one) to comfort others going through similar circumstances.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ are not perfect people.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Think of someone at your school, on your team, or in your band that needs to experience mercy. How can you show them God's mercy this week?

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



MAKE LIFE APPLICATION



HOLD STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE

FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING**PRAYER***2-3 minutes*

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks. Spend time praying for your students to see people the way God does.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 9:13 (ESV)

NOTES

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¹ Louisa Schaefer, "Trash Art Litters Cologne," DW (Deutsche Welle, April 20, 2006), <https://www.dw.com/en/trash-art-litters-cologne/a-1974237>.

